



## ***AOT in Action***

### ***TOURISM WORKS FOR ARIZONA!***

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

#### **A Message from the Director:**

Good morning.

Thanks to the owners of one of the most historic symbols of the country-western music scene, Mesa will soon sing the praises of a new resort and convention center that is slated to be one of the largest hotel and conference centers in the country.

Last week, Gaylord Entertainment announced it will build a destination resort and convention center in Mesa and we couldn't be more thrilled! Known as a pioneer in the resort and convention center industry, Gaylord Entertainment is the owner of the Grand Ole Opry and four properties in the U.S., with Mesa scheduled to be the fifth.

What is so significant about this project is the vision of DMB, a Scottsdale-based development firm, to partner with not only Gaylord Entertainment but also Westcor and a championship golf course to be designed by Tom Fazio. Upon completion, this project will be much more than a hotel and conference center and will truly change the face of the southeast valley. As one of the largest private-investment deals in Arizona's history, I applaud and congratulate the City of Mesa and DMB and look forward to the enormous economic development benefits including the thousands of jobs that will be generated from this project.

And, even better, this will certainly attract many first-time visitors, who will bring their families to discover the vibrant variety of Arizona.

Be sure to read more about this in the ***Industry News*** section below.

Have a great week.



Margie A. Emmermann  
Director  
Arizona Office of Tourism

## AOT News Flash

### SAVE the DATE: ATU's Interactive Marketing Workshop

The Arizona Office of Tourism is proud to present Arizona Tourism University's complimentary workshop **Four Key Pieces to the Interactive Marketing Puzzle**.

The "Four Key Pieces to the Interactive Marketing Puzzle" workshop is an informative and in-depth look at four of the most common interactive / online marketing elements: Search, E-mail, Social and Analytics. Building upon the previous Arizona Tourism University workshop, 'How to Develop an Interactive Marketing Strategy,' this year's workshop will expand upon these 'Four Keys' to provide attendees with real-world examples, tips and tools that can be applied to their current interactive marketing campaigns.

Register now by contacting Meghan Dorn at 602-364-3708 or [mdorn@azot.gov](mailto:mdorn@azot.gov).

**Four Key Pieces to the Interactive Marketing Puzzle** will be held from **9:00 a.m. to Noon** in the following locations:

Tuesday, October, 28 – [White Stallion Ranch](#)

Thursday, October 30 – [Lowell Observatory](#)

Neither of these dates work with your schedule? Then take advantage of our new online opportunity!

This year, AOT is proud to introduce ATU On-Line. We will be offering all of our workshops over the Internet in the form of a webinar. These condensed versions will offer the same great information as the workshops. The inaugural class is **Thursday, November 6**. Be sure to register for the class!

## Trippin' with AOT

### Navajo Nation FAM Tour Offers New Discoveries

AOT's Jennifer Sutcliffe participated in a FAM to the Navajo Nation to experience its tried and true attractions as well as to see what is new on the tribal land. The FAM, planned by Donovan Hanley with the Navajo Nation Hospitality Enterprise, was a three-day trip that included visits to the Hubbell Trading Post, Canyon de Chelly and Antelope Canyon as well as some exciting new places that will enhance the visitor experience. Some of these new places include the View Hotel in Monument Valley. It will open later this fall and will offer 96 rooms and a restaurant. Also, the new Antelope Point Marina on Lake Powell is a new luxury experience for boaters with a restaurant, shops, and deluxe customer service amenities. The new Explore Navajo Museum in

Tuba City offers an interactive look at Navajo history and culture with the Navajo Code Talkers Exhibit next door showing photos and the unbreakable code used in World War II. Jessica Stephens from the Flagstaff Convention and Visitors Bureau and Martha Place from the Sedona Chamber also participated. For more information, contact Jennifer Sutcliffe at 602-364-3693 or via e-mail at [jsutcliffe@azot.gov](mailto:jsutcliffe@azot.gov).

## **Industry News**

### **Destination Resort and Convention Center Coming to Mesa**

DMB Associates, Inc. and Gaylord Entertainment announced an agreement to create a destination resort and convention center that could bring billions of dollars in private investments and thousands of new jobs to Mesa and the Southeast Valley over the next several decades. DMB also announced its agreement for a Tom Fazio 18-hole championship golf course and the continued regional alliance with Westcor for future retail planning. The agreement with Gaylord Entertainment will bring a destination resort and convention center to Mesa Proving Grounds, a 3,200-acre portion of land used currently by General Motors as its desert testing facility, laying the foundation for substantial ongoing private investment and development. Although all of the precise details of the size, theme and character of the resort and convention center have yet to be finalized, the Gaylord name ensures that the facility will celebrate the geographical heritage of the Southwest, introducing regional themes and attractions designed specifically for this project. Once built, the hotel will likely be the largest in the state of Arizona. Construction is expected to begin in 2009 with a completion date of 2012. For more information, visit [www.gaylordentertainment.com](http://www.gaylordentertainment.com).

### **Grand Canyon National Park to Waive Entrance Fees on National Public Lands Day**

On Saturday, September 27, 2008, Grand Canyon National Park will celebrate National Public Lands Day by offering free admission to park visitors. The National Park Service (NPS) adopted National Public Lands Day (NPLD) as its “fee free” day in 2004, and it is the only day that entrance fees are waived systematically at national park sites throughout the country. Normally, 147 of the country’s 391 NPS sites charge entrance fees ranging from \$3 to \$25. The other 244 areas do not have entrance fees. While entrance fees and commercial tour fees will be waived on National Public Lands Day, recreation “user fees” such as backcountry permit fees, camping fees and fees for other activities offered in the park will not be waived.

All free entry passes are good only for National Public Lands Day. Free entry passes issued to visitors at Grand Canyon National Park will be valid at both the North and South Rims of the park. Free entry passes issued to commercial tour operators will be valid only for that individual tour. National Public Lands Day began in 1994 when organizers recognized the need for shared stewardship of our public lands, and decided to bring together individual and organizational volunteers to refurbish, restore and improve America’s public lands for recreation. Since then, NPLD has grown into the nation’s largest hands-on volunteer effort to improve and enhance federal, state and local public lands. The staff at Grand Canyon National Park would like to encourage the park’s friends and neighbors to take advantage of this national “fee free” day by getting reacquainted with their local national parks.

For more information about “fee free” day at Grand Canyon National Park, please call 928-638-7951 or 7954. For information on visiting Grand Canyon National Park, please visit the park’s web site at [www.nps.gov/grca](http://www.nps.gov/grca), or call 928-638-7888. To learn more about National Public Lands Day, please visit the web site at [www.publiclandsday.org](http://www.publiclandsday.org).

## **Feds to Launch Ad Campaign to Promote ID Options**

U.S. travelers going to Mexico, the Caribbean, Bermuda or Canada by land or sea will have to carry one of six government-approved IDs as of next June 1, and government officials want to make sure they know about it. The so-called Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative kicked into high gear with the Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection announcing Wednesday a \$12 million ad campaign, featuring a TV spot during tonight's NFL opener between the New York Giants and the Washington Redskins.

The effort drew immediate praise from the Travel Industry Association. In addition to a traditional passport, travelers can choose from a passport card--and in some states, an enhanced driver's license--as well as from three types of cards available in the Trusted Traveler Program for frequent border crossers. One exception was made for cruise-ship passengers on trips that begin and end at the same port, such as Miami; travelers can provide a birth certificate and photo ID. Cruise lines had objected to an earlier deadline, and Congress delayed the land and sea ID requirements until June. Air travelers have had to produce passports since January 2007.

The Travel Industry Association praised the DHS and the Customs and Border Protection agency for the national TV, print and online communications campaign to educate U.S. and Canadian travelers about the new document requirements. "Explaining changing U.S. security policies is essential to avoiding disruptions in cross-border travel and sustaining America's travel economy," said TIA President and CEO Roger Dow in a statement Wednesday. ([www.KansasCityStar.com](http://www.KansasCityStar.com); *Special to TA*)

## **ESTA Registration to Begin in January**

ESTA registration is expected to launch in January, but Homeland Security officials say they'll be slow to enforce the new rule. It applies only to travelers from the 27 Visa-Waiver countries, where citizens aren't required to obtain a visa before visiting the U.S. The list includes most of Europe, Japan and Australia. ESTA, which stands for Electronic System for Travel Authorization, will eliminate the form, a task usually completed on the plane. The travel industry argues an unhospitable image is hampering the influx of foreign tourists. And they're concerned perceptions of the newest requirement, the ESTA, will add to the problem. (*Page 4, Miami Herald Business Monday, Mon.*)

## **Fed Says International Visitors Aiding U.S. Tourism**

Recent U.S. tourism activity has been "mixed" but has continued to gain support from international visitation, the Federal Reserve reported Wednesday in the latest edition of its "beige book," periodic report on business conditions. U.S. tourism activity varied regionally, the Fed said. "Atlanta, Minneapolis and Kansas City reported mixed or steady conditions since the last report," the Fed noted, referring to U.S. regions by the names of the Fed's district offices. "Boston, New York and Richmond reported improvements since the last report. San Francisco reported that tourism was flat to down in most major destinations in that district, significantly so in Hawaii."

The report noted that international visitors boosted tourism in Boston, New York and Minneapolis. In contrast, several districts noted that domestic vacationers appeared to be reducing miles traveled and amounts spent on trip. Boston reported that business travel has been better than expected. (*Pages C3, New York Times; 6B, USA Today; A4, Wall Street Journal; [www.Travel Weekly.com](http://www.TravelWeekly.com)*)

## Increased Use of Technology Biggest Meeting Industry Trend

HSMAI Affordable Meetings National and Event Technology Expo pre-show survey revealed that planners are noticing an increase in the amount of technology used for meetings, big and small. Respondents to the survey are planning to attend the Affordable Meetings(R) National Conference & Exposition and Event Technology Expo(TM), Sept. 10-11, 2008, at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center in Washington, D.C. According to [HotelMarketing](#) the majority of meeting and event planners (57.5 percent) said they are incorporating technology into their meetings with the use of online registration, followed by video conferencing (20.4 percent), social networks (17.7 percent) and blogs (14.2 percent). Others mentioned the increasing use of electronic surveys, cyber cafes, and podcasts. Planners also said that more education about technology and the options available would make their jobs easier. As one respondent said, "My job would be easier if I had a better understanding of meeting technology and how I can incorporate social networking into live events." Planners said that meeting technology resources (44.2 percent) is one of the top five vendors they will be seeking at Affordable Meetings National, an increase of nearly 10 percent compared to the Affordable Meetings(R) Mid-America pre-show survey in April. Others are in need of hotel and resort locations (84.1 percent), venues (57.5 percent), promotional items (54.9 percent) and transportation (43.4 percent).

## Extended-Stay Lodgings Becoming Popular with Short-Stay Travelers

Extended-stay is the way a growing number of value-minded vacationers are keeping travel costs contained says [USA Today](#). Demand is up for the nation's nearly 2,500 extended-stay lodgings, originally the domain of business men and women on long assignments, now also sought out by leisure travelers. Occupancy averaged 69.9 percent from January through June, better than the U.S. hotel-industry average of 61.4 percent, Smith Travel Research says.

The average ES nightly rate was \$85.60 in that period, compared with the lodging-industry average of \$107.64. These lower rates typically buy suite-style accommodations with kitchens, complimentary breakfasts and Wi-Fi; lots of brands have happy hours, barbecue nights and other free evening eats. Despite their classification, most long-stay brands do accept overnight visitors.

Extended-stay properties are known for being "cheaper than the industry average and with more amenities than the industry average," says Jan Freitag, a Smith Travel Research vice president. They make up "the healthiest" segment in the industry when it comes to growth in demand, he adds. Demand was up 3.6 percent in the first half of 2008 (flat for other hotel segments in this shaky economy) and supply rose 8.6 percent to nearly 2,500 properties — meaning developers think extended-stays are a good investment, he says. They're usually located outside expensive downtown areas, which helps keep costs down.